



Bay County Master Gardener Volunteer Hours Policy

In addition to the Master Gardener Volunteer Program policy statement, MSU Extension - Bay County has adopted the following guidelines related to volunteer hours and re-certification in the Bay County Master Gardener Volunteer Program.

Basic Volunteer Commitment Policy – Following the 40 hours of classroom training, a Master Gardener volunteer trainee is required to complete 40 hours of volunteer service in horticulture/gardening-related activities. The purpose is to extend MSU Extension's educational programs in the areas of horticulture, gardening, and small-scale food production. These horticulture/gardening-related volunteer activities that count toward Master Gardener volunteer certification must have educational value for others and be non-paying for the Master Gardener volunteer. The volunteer will provide reliable and accurate information to the public from requests received via telephone, office visits, or letter inquiries, by the use of displays, classes, and workshops in matters related to home gardening.

- *At the discretion of the county Master Gardener Volunteer Program coordinator, 20 of the required 40 volunteer hours will be spent working on MSU Extension-directed projects and activities related to horticulture.*
- *Personal Choice Hours – any project that meets the qualifications of the Master Gardener program guidelines. (For example: community service projects for schools, churches, parks, libraries, non-profits, etc.) Participants are encouraged to volunteer their time in a way that is especially meaningful to them. Approval by the county Master Gardener coordinator must be obtained before engaging in any volunteer activity.*
- *To receive credit for volunteer hours, all volunteer projects must be approved by the local office prior to receiving volunteer hour credits for basic certification or re-certification.*
- *Master Gardener volunteers may work across county lines, and while policies may vary between counties, all county policies must be consistent with the state re-certification policies.*
- *MSU Extension - Bay County will recognize the validity of volunteer and educational programs approved by other county Master Gardener Volunteer Programs.*
- *The Master Gardener volunteer receives hour-for-hour volunteer credit for approved volunteer activities. Travel time may be included toward volunteer hours credit.*
- *All Master Gardener volunteers may submit new projects to the Master Gardener Volunteer Program coordinator on the prescribed form for authorization as a Bay County Master Gardener project.*

- *A list of approved projects will be made available annually and updated throughout the year as deemed necessary by the Master Gardener Volunteer Program coordinator.*

Continuing Education/Re-certification Credit Policy – A Master Gardener volunteer may re-certify for continued participation in the Master Gardener Volunteer Program by volunteering 20 service hours each year. This time is divided into 15 hours of volunteer time and 5 hours of continuing education. Continuing education credit is sometimes awarded one-half credit, but volunteer service is always given full credit. The following apply to re-certification:

- *Provide a minimum of 15 hours of MSU Extension-approved volunteer service each year.*
 - *A portion (usually half) of the 15 volunteer hours is to be spent on MSU Extension-approved projects. “MSU Extension-approved projects” means that the volunteer project is something that directly benefits the local Extension office.*
 - *The other half of the volunteer hours can be “personal choice” hours, as long as these hours are spent following the re-certification policy.*
- *Complete five (5) additional hours of horticulture education training each year.*
- *Full credit, hour-for-hour, will be issued for attending MSU Extension-sponsored programs, state, and international Master Gardener conferences, and MSU courses where credits are offered. If no credits are designated, call the Master Gardener Volunteer Program coordinator. Travel time **may not** be included for education hours credits. Documentation will be needed for out-county education events.*
- *Courses not sponsored by MSU will be awarded one-half hour credit for each hour of class time.*

The Master Gardener volunteer is truly an extension of MSU Extension: involved in educational outreach to the public through activities that increase the capacity of paid MSU Extension employees. Examples of these activities include staffing the Bay County Master Gardener Volunteer Program telephone hot-line, working at a local demonstration garden, staffing an information booth at a local event, or giving presentations to service groups. Through volunteering, Master Gardeners enrich their knowledge of horticulture, provide horticulture education to others, and launch exciting ideas.

Remember:

Volunteer Hours = DOING

Education Hours = LEARNING

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Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by calling MSU Extension Bay County at (989) 895-4026.